

Hudsonotes

Column of Mechanical Miscellany
by George Schmidt
Mishicot, Wisc.

FIVE YEARS have passed since the death of Tom McCahill in autumn 1975. Probably the country's best-known automotive writer, he first introduced the new-car road test as a monthly feature to U.S. magazine readers in 1946, and was among the first to recognize and report on the astonishing roadability of Hudson's new 1948 "Step-Down" design. No one since has come close to matching "Uncle Tom's" unique blend of humor, automotive sense, and breezily picturesque prose . . . nor his gift for prophecy. To a reader who suggested that what the auto industry needed was more government meddling, he replied that we would probably soon be reduced to "a choice between a Senate Six and a House Eight." On another occasion he elaborated (as I recall): "Automobiles of the future would become basic, God how basic, forms of transportation. They would have all of the excitement and interest of bathroom fixtures — and whether you use Standard or Crane plumbing doesn't make very much difference."

He will not soon be forgotten by automotive enthusiasts.

MORE ABOUT LIGHTING on Hudson-built vehicles comes to us in an interesting letter from Jon Battle. Directional signals were used in some European countries for years before they were required here, and were often uglier than any U.S.-type add-ons. When Jon removed the two European-style "flippers" from his '37 Terraplane Cv. (which had spent most of its life in Denmark), there remained the question of possibly fitting conventional directional lights instead, if it could be done without ruining car's appearance.

The control problem at steering wheel was easily solved, since Hudson products retained a uniform diameter column jacket tube and inner shaft for many years; and he was able to use standard later-model parts for the switch box, wire conduit, and clamps, along with a 1952-type (5-wire) switch so that brake lamp filaments in taillights could serve for rear turn signals as well. The usual slot was cut in steering column tube, and in lieu of drilling steering wheel hub for cancelling pins, a small hose clamp was placed on shaft to operate switch cancelling fingers. Painted to match, the parts on column look as if made for a '37, but may be somewhat in the way if Electric Hand is to be added later.

For front turn signals on this car, a pair of optional 1937 fender "eyebrow" lamps

may eventually be found, although two modern amber add-on units (clamped to bumper) are being used at present. One possible alternative here might be the small free-standing accessory lamps, still available and usually sold as backup lights (see illustration), which have chromed shells and sufficiently neutral styling to blend in fairly well with most models since the early '30's.



FOUR-WAY FLASHER kits as an add-on for directional signals date mostly from the mid-'60's, but a few were available earlier. Jon reports finding one called "Protect-O-Flash," for 6-volt cars, complete with underdash clamp and instruction page, still in its original 1940's box, recently at a flea market.

FROM ENGLAND comes another interesting letter about Hudson lighting equipment in the 1930's. Alan Gardner, London, writes in part:

"The Tell-Turn signal light kit referred to in Hudsonotes (May/June, p. 28) was offered as early as 1935, possibly 1934. It is shown in the combined '34 and '35 Accessories catalogue as part no. 114637. The control switch replaced the gear-shift knob, and the cable was clipped to the shift lever."

Parking (fender) lamps pictured on the 1938 Hudson (centerspread, May/June WTN) were not the stock or production ones, according to information on original factory photos, but Alan says that these lamps were indeed used on Hudsons exported to England.

Column for May/June (p. 28) also included mention of the Three Beam Headlights, which were described thus in U.S. literature for the 1934 Hudson Eights: "They throw a powerful light ahead — or close in front of the car — or to the side of the road to illuminate the edge of the pavement, ditches or obstacles alongside the highway. This three beam action is controlled by a convenient toe button and at last gives the motorist full road and roadside illumination wherever and whenever it is needed."

It is not clear from this just how the third beam was produced, however, nor whether all export models were equipped with similar lamps. Possibly there were differences, for Alan writes: "There is reference to this feature in the '34 Terraplane sales catalogue. It was not a Hudson feature. The '34 Terraplane had Tri-Beam headlights with normal twin-filament bulbs plus parking light. What is the answer? Simply crossing the head-

lamp beams as shown in the copy of the Terraplane/Hudson Service and Technical Information attached." He encloses photocopies of two pages from a manual, which describe a three-beam system, but not one intended especially for road-sides and curves:

"The head lamps on the 1934 Terraplanes and Hudsons provide city driving, clear road, and meeting beams. The city beam is obtained by pulling the lighting switch knob out to the second position. When the knob is pulled out to the third position, either the clear road or the meeting beam is obtained depending on the toe board light control.

"The meeting beam gives high intensity, long range light on the right of the highway and a lowered beam on the left to prevent glare in the eyes of the on-coming driver. On the Hudson the meeting beam is obtained by using the lower filament in the right lamp and the upper filament in the left lamp . . . the Terraplanes use the upper filament of the right lamp and the lower filament of the left lamp. . . . The lens are marked Right and Left, and must be installed according to these markings."

Was this the identical system used on Hudson products in the U.S., and was it also continued for 1935 and later? We'd like to hear from owners of these models, and plan to report in a future issue.